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CONVERSATIONS



P R A Y E R.

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Conversations on prayer

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	Page
Prayer commanded and encouraged.....	5

CHAPTER II.

We may ask amiss.....	17
-----------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

We must pray in the name of Christ, for things agreeable to the will of God.....	22
--	----

CHAPTER IV.

We must pray in faith.....	37
----------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

We must pray with right feelings.....	52
---------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

We must forgive others when we pray ; and we must forsake sin and obey God, if we would have him answer our prayers.....	70
--	----

CHAPTER VII.

	Page
We must pray with watchfulness and perseverance, earnestness and importunity.....	81

CHAPTER VIII.

When, where, for whom, and how we must pray. 105	
--	--

CHAPTER I.

PRAYER COMMANDED AND ENCOURAGED.

“ O what a beautiful evening this is, mother,” said little Susan, as she looked out of the window. The moon was shining bright and clear, glistening upon the snow and frost, and the stars twinkled in the clear blue sky. She turned around upon the blazing wood-fire, that made her mother’s room so pleasant and comfortable.

“ Yes, my dear Susan,” said her mother, “ it is a pleasant evening, and well calculated to turn our thoughts towards that great and good Being, who made the world, and the sun, moon, and stars; and who gives us all the comforts and blessings we enjoy. O, how delightful it is to look up in a clear moonlight evening, and see the sky set so thick with stars. David was filled with wonder at the

sight, because he saw in them the glory of his heavenly Father. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work.’”

“How great God must be, mother, to make all these things! And will he listen to such a little girl as I am, if I pray to him? David says, ‘When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?’ But I am only a little girl. Will he care for me?”

“But, in the same psalm, my dear, David says, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength.’ And Jesus says that God takes care of the little birds: ‘Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.’ If the Lord takes care of the little birds,

will he think you too small for him to notice? No; Jesus says, 'the very hairs of your head are all numbered.' If he counts the hairs of your head, surely he will not refuse to listen when you pray to him. But our heavenly Father has not left us to *suppose* that we may go to him. He has kindly told us to come and ask for what we want; and graciously promised to hear and answer our prayers."

"O, mother, I cannot think he would like to be troubled with my little wants."

"My dear, it is one of the most glorious things in the character of God, that he is as careful of the least as of the greatest of his works. Have you never seen a little spider on the wall or fence?"

"Yes, mother, and it is a very little thing, indeed, so that I could but just see it."

"Yet, my dear, the same God that



made the sun, moon, and stars, made this little spider; and you see how much pains he has taken to provide it food. See the little web on which it is running. God has given the spider the wonderful power and skill of weaving this web from its own body, and hanging it up for a net, to catch the little flies, which it kills and eats. Do you think he would care more for the little spider, that has no soul, than for you?"

"But the little spider does not pray to him, mother. I am afraid to speak to the great God. I am afraid he will not be willing to hear such a little child."

“ My dear, if I tell you to ask me for any thing you want, will you be afraid to come to me for it?”

“ O, no, mother, I should not ; because I know that you love to give me good things, and make me happy. And I always know that I shall get what I ask, if it is best that I should have it.”

“ Well, my dear, you may be more certain that God will give you what you ask for, if it is best you should have it. Hear what Jesus says about it. ‘ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For *every one* that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.’ ”

“ O, that is for me ; for it says *every one* ; and if *every one* may ask, then a little child may ask. But how *can* God be willing to give us what we ask for ? ”

“ He is our *heavenly Father*. We

are his *children*, if we love him. You know how willing your father and mother are to give you good things. But God is *more willing*. Hear what Jesus says again : ‘If a son shall ask *bread* of any of you that is a father, will he give him a *stone*? or if he ask a *fish*, will he give him a *serpent*? Or, if he ask an *egg*, will he offer him a *scorpion*? ’ ’

“ No, mother, I know father would not serve me so. He always loves to please me ; and it grieves him when I am a bad girl, so that he cannot do for me as he would. When he comes home at night, he always smiles so, I know he loves to give me good things.”

“ Well, your father and mother are not as good as God. We are sinners, and often do wrong : and Jesus says, ‘ If ye then, *being evil*, know how to give *good gifts* unto your children, HOW MUCH MORE shall your heavenly

Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him ! ”

“ How wonderful that is, mother ! Is the great God more willing to give me his Holy Spirit, than my dear parents are to give me good things ? ”

“ Yes, my dear, it is true ; and he has given us a great many other promises, to show that he is willing to hear our prayers. He has even *commanded* us to pray to him, because he knew it would be for our good.”

“ O, I should not think anybody would need to be *commanded* to pray to God. It is such a privilege for us to be allowed to speak to our heavenly Father, and ask him for the things we want, I should think everybody would be glad to do it.”

“ We should think so, my dear ; but people are not always willing to do what is for their own good. Sometimes children must be made to study their books, when they do not like to do it, although it is for their good.

Parents do this from love to their children, and not because it is of any benefit to themselves. So, it is of no benefit to God for us to pray to him; but he commands us to pray, because he loves us, and knows it is for our good."

"Do, mother, tell me some more of God's promises about prayer, and his commands, too."

"Yes, my dear; I will first read some of the passages of Scripture by which it is made our duty to pray."

(Susan's mother reads from the Bible.) "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." "In every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." "I will, that men pray everywhere." "Watch and pray."

"And now will you read some more of the promises, mother?"

"Yes, I will read a few of them;

but there are so many that I can hardly tell which to choose. ‘The Lord is *nigh* unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in *truth*. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him : he also will hear their cry, and will save them.’”

“And will the Lord be nigh to *me*, if I pray to him? And will he give me what I desire?”

“Yes, if you ‘call upon him *in truth*,’ he will be near to you.”

“What does that mean, mother?”

“To call upon God *in truth*, is to be *sincere* in your prayers : to feel in your heart just what you say. It is not prayer to say over some words that you have learned, without understanding what they mean, and really wishing for the things for which you ask. It is lying to God. If you mock him in that way, he will not answer your prayer. But here are some more promises : ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God,

who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him.' 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' But now, my dear Susan, it is growing late. We will sing a little hymn, and pray to God ; and then we will lie down and sleep."

"But tell me first, my dear mother, what I should ask God to give me his Holy Spirit for."

"You have a wicked heart. You love to do wrong, and hate to do right. This is the disposition of every one that has not been born again."

"I do not know what that means, mother."

"To be born again is to have your heart so changed, that you will love to do right, and hate to do wrong. You want God's Holy Spirit to make you willing to obey and love him ; because you are, by nature, so wicked that you will not obey and love God, till he has changed your heart."

“ What is my heart, mother ?”

“ It is that part of you that chooses, and loves, and hates. Now, you sometimes choose and love what is wrong, and refuse and hate what is right. But if God’s Holy Spirit changes your heart, then you will choose and love what is right, and refuse and hate what is wrong.”

“ And then shall I want the Holy Spirit, after my heart is changed ?”

“ Yes, my dear ; every right feeling that we have, and every good thing in us, comes from God’s Holy Spirit. And, after your heart is changed, you will need the Spirit of God to keep you in the right way, to help you to overcome the bad dispositions of your heart, and to make you know more and more of God, and be more and more like Christ.”

“ Then, mother, am I to blame for not obeying God, before he gives me his Holy Spirit ?”

“ Yes ; you ought to obey God

now, and you are to blame for not obeying him. You ought to love Jesus, and trust in him, and give him your heart now. And the reason why you need God's Holy Spirit is, that your heart is so bad you *will not* obey him."

HYMN.

It is my father's chief delight,
My mother's greatest joy,
To have me do the thing that's right,
Nor once their peace destroy.

Then they delight good things to give,
That I may happy be ;
And always will, while so I live,
Be kind and good to me.

But more, my heavenly Father, God,
Is pleased when I obey ;
Nor loves to use his dreadful rod,
To keep me in his way.

And yet more willing still is he,
If I but ask, to give
His Holy Spirit, full and free,
Within my heart to live.

Then I will early learn to pray,
And ever love to ask,
And always mean the things I say,
Nor think my prayers a task.

CHAPTER II.

WE MAY ASK AMISS.

“MOTHER, if God is so willing to give us good things, when we ask for them, what is the reason that people do not always get what they pray for? I have heard a great many prayers that I think have never been answered; and I have prayed a great many times for things that I have never received.”

“My dear, it is not because God does not mind his promises. It is because people do not always ask aright. The apostle James says: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye *ask amiss*, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”

“I do not know what *lusts* means, mother.”

“The word *lust*, my dear, may be

understood differently, according to the connexion in which it is used. Here, I suppose it means *selfish desires*. You may desire good things for no other reason than to gratify yourself, without any regard to the glory of God, the good of others, or even your own eternal good. You may ask for the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the comfort which you think He will give you ; you may ask God to forgive your sins, because you are afraid he will punish you, and not because you hate sin, or desire His favour and love ; or you may pray for the Holy Spirit, because you wish to have the name of being very religious. All this would be asking amiss, to consume it upon your *lusts*. But that you may understand my meaning, I will suppose a few cases. Suppose you come to me, and say, "Mother, I want something."— "What do you want, my dear?" "I do not know, mother. You told me

to ask you, when I wanted any thing. I want something now." Do you think I should give you any thing?"

"No, mother; you would think I was trifling with you ; and you would be displeased, and send me away."

"But people often pray just in that way. The time has come for them to pray ; and they think they must say something ; and so they go and pray to God, without feeling sensible of their wants. In fact, they do not really desire any thing *in particular*. Such prayers are trifling with God, and he will not answer them."

"But, mother, should we let the time go by, without praying, when we do not feel sensible of our wants?"

"No my dear ; we ought to have a deep sense of our wants, all the time, and to maintain a spirit of prayer, so that we shall be prepared at any time to pray aright. But, if our stated time for prayer comes, and finds our hearts cold, so that we cannot tell

what to pray for, we should think over our wants, and read God's word ; and think how willing he is to give us what we need, till our hearts are warmed with holy desires, and we are prepared to ask God in earnest for things that we sincerely desire. But, suppose you come and ask me for some cakes, when I know you are not hungry, but only want them to please your taste, and gratify your appetite, do you think I would give them to you ? ”

“ I think you ought not to give them to me mother ; for they would only hurt me.”

“ Well, if you ask me for a new dress, when I know you want it only for the sake of gratifying your vanity, by appearing in fine clothes, ought I to give it to you ? ”

“ No, mother ; it would do me more hurt than good.”

“ Well, God sees your heart, all the time ; and he knows how you feel

about every thing you ask. And if you ask for his blessing to gratify your selfish feelings, or your vanity, he will not give you the things you pray for. He abhors such prayers. ‘Lying lips,’ says Solomon, ‘are an abomination to the Lord.’ But, if I should promise to give you every thing you ask for, you would not think, I meant to say that I would give them to you, if you ask for them in any of these ways that I have mentioned.”

“No, mother; and if I should ask so, and you should not give me what I ask for, you would not break your promise.”

“Neither does the Lord break his promise, when he refuses to give people what they ask, when they do not ask aright.”

“Well, mother, do teach me how to pray aright, so that God will give me what I ask for.”

“I will try to do so, my dear; but

we have talked long enough this time."

CHAPTER III.

**WE MUST PRAY IN THE NAME OF CHRIST, FOR THINGS
AGREEABLE TO THE WILL OF GOD.**

"My dear mother, I want to hear more about prayer. You told me you would teach me how to ask aright, for what I want."

"Well, my dear, the first thing I have to tell you, is, that you must pray in the name of Christ; for there is no other way that you can come to God. Just before Jesus left his disciples, he said to them, "Whosoever ye shall ask *in my name*, that will I do. If ye shall ask any thing *in my name*, I will do it. Whosoever ye shall ask the Father *in my name*, he will give it you." And the apostle Paul says: "Giving thanks

always for all things unto God and the Father, *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

"But I do not understand that, mother. What does it mean, to ask in the name of Jesus?"

"My dear, if you wanted to ask a favour of some great man, perhaps you would not like to go to him yourself, but would get some kind friend, that was acquainted with him, to go and ask him for you. Judge Thomas is a great man, always full of business; and if I sent you to borrow a book of him, you might get his little Emily, whom he loves so well, that he never would deny her any thing, to go and ask her father to give you the book. You remember, you told me that little Jane Miller tore her Sunday-school book, and lost her right to take books from the library; so that she got Emily Thomas to get one for her, on her own account.

"Well, now this may give you

some idea of what it is to ask in the name of Christ. We have all disobeyed God. We are all sinners. We have lost our right to the favour of God ; so that we cannot go to him and ask him to give us the things we need, *on our own account*. But Jesus has taken our nature upon him, obeyed God for us, suffered for our sins, and gone up to heaven to pray for us. God is well pleased with him, and will always give him what he asks. And He will not let us come to Him, to ask any thing of Him, or to praise Him, or to worship Him in any way, except *in the name of Jesus*. And He will not give us any thing, except *on the account of Jesus*. And, my dear, we must not only pray in the name of Christ, but we must ask for things agreeable to the will of God. The Bible says, that if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us."

“I do not know what *according to his will* means, mother.”

“When we speak of asking for things *according to the will of God*, we mean things that he is willing to give us.”

“But how shall I know what he is willing to give me?”

“There are some things, my dear, which God has told us in the Bible that he is willing to give us. Christ says to his disciples, ‘If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.’ And Paul says to the Thessalonians, ‘This is the will of God, even your sanctification.’ So, if we pray for God’s Holy Spirit to renew our hearts, to take away our sins, and to keep us from sinning, we ask for what we know God is willing to give us. And this includes all spiritual blessings that we need. And, if we have the

Spirit of God in our hearts, he will teach us what things to pray for. The apostle Paul says, ‘The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.’ As every right feeling of our hearts comes from the Spirit of God, so every holy desire for spiritual blessings is formed in us by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, all real and acceptable prayer must be the fruit of God’s Spirit. God has also informed us that he is willing to give us food and clothing, and other comforts, day by day, as we need them. ‘Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.’ Christ says,

‘Take no thought, saying, what shall we *eat*? or what shall we *drink*? or wherewithal shall we be *clothed*? But seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and *all these things shall be added unto you*.’ And he teaches us to pray, ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’ So, you see, God has taught you, in the Bible, what *kind* of blessings you may ask for, *knowing* them to be agreeable to his will. But you may sometimes desire particular things, which the Lord may see it would be neither for your good nor for his glory to give you, just in the way and at the time you desire them. If you pray aright for the influences of his Holy Spirit, he will certainly give them to you, though it may not be just at the time and in the way that you think best. And if you pray for food and clothing, he will give it to you; though he may see that it would not be good for you to have just as much, or just the

kind that you desire. My dear, if your father should send you away to school, and, on parting with you, should say, 'Now, Susan, if you want any thing, just write and let me know, and I will send it to you ;' how would you understand him ? Would you think he meant to give you liberty to ask for any thing your fancy might put into your head, with the certainty of receiving it ? If you should write home as soon as you arrived at the school, saying, 'My dear father, please to send me a gold watch, and some jewels for my ears, and some rings for my fingers,' would you expect to get them ?'

"No, mother, I should not, because I know that he does not think it best for me to wear such things."

"No ; and just so, when God promises to give us what we ask for, he does not mean that he will give us any thing that he has forbidden us to have. But, would you think

it certain, from your father's promise, that you would get every thing you should ask for, even though it should be something which he had not forbidden you to have?"

"No, mother; if it was any thing that he had told me he wished me to have, I should feel certain of getting it. But, if it was something that I thought I needed, but did not know his mind about it, I should say, "Father, I want this very much; but I do not know whether you will think it best for me to have it; and you know better than I do;" and I should keep asking him, till he gave me an answer. But, if he said, "No, Susan; this is not best for you;" I should be satisfied, and should not think he had broken his promise."

"Well, my dear, just so you are to understand the promises of God; and just so you must ask him for what you want. If it is any thing which he has told you in the Bible

that he wished you to have, you may be sure of receiving it, *if you ask aright*; and if you do not receive it, you may conclude that you have *asked amiss*. But, if it is any thing that you are not certain it is best for you to have, or any thing that God has not told you he is willing to give, you must ask with the same spirit of submission, that you would ask your father, in the case I just supposed. You may keep asking, and you may ask very earnestly, till you see cause to believe that it is not the will of God that you should have what you desire; but then you must submit, and be satisfied that the will of God should be done."

"Mother, can you tell me about any good people mentioned in the Bible, who asked for things that they did not receive?"

"Yes, my dear, I can tell you of several. Moses was one of the best men that ever lived; and a great

many times, the Lord heard his prayers, in a most wonderful manner. But, after the children of Israel got within sight of the promised land, Moses prayed and said: 'O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in Heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.' But the Lord had told him before, that he should not go into the land of Canaan, because, at one time, when the children of Israel murmured against God, he had shown a bad spirit. And now, He would not do as Moses desired. But He told Moses that he might go up into a high mountain and see the land."

"And was Moses satisfied with that?"

“ Yes, he submitted, and said no more about it, after he knew the Lord’s will. And there was good King David, too, who was a prophet, and who wrote most of the Psalms. His little child was taken very sick, and was likely to die ; and he prayed that God would save the child’s life. He fasted too, and went and lay all night upon the ground. And his friends went to him and tried to persuade him to get up ; but he would not ; and they could not get him to eat any thing. And this he did from day to day.”

“ And did the child die, mother ?”

“ On the seventh day, the child died ; and his people were afraid to tell him of it ; for they said, ‘ Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice ; how will he then vex himself if we tell him the child is dead ?’ But when David saw them whispering to one another,

he asked them if the child was dead. And when they told him that it was dead, he rose up and washed himself, and changed his clothes, and went into the house of the Lord, and worshipped. Then he went to his own house, and called for something to eat."

"Why, I should think he would have been still more sorry, when he knew the child was dead."

"So his people thought; and they said to him, 'What is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.' But he answered and said, 'While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' Here is

a most excellent example of prayer, in cases where we do not know what the will of the Lord is. So long as there was any hope that the Lord would hear him, he fasted and wept and prayed, and refused to be comforted. But as soon as the Lord had decided the matter, and taken away the child, he submitted, with sweet resignation to the Divine will."

"But, mother, it seems to me that he did not show a right spirit before the child died."

"I think he did, my dear; he did not know certainly but the Lord might be entreated for the child; and until the will of the Lord was made known, he was not required to submit to it. But as soon as the Lord made known his will, so that there was no doubt about it, he was satisfied, and rose up and worshipped the Lord, who had afflicted him. And we should do the same. While there is any reason to hope that the Lord

will give us what we desire, we ought to pray as David did. But, when the Lord makes known his determination not to give us what we ask, then we should be satisfied, and worship Him with humble submission. The Apostle Paul, also once prayed, without receiving what he asked for. He says, after he had seen a wonderful vision of the glory of God, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, to keep him humble."

"What was that, mother?"

"I cannot tell you, my dear. It was something that was a trial to him, but he does not tell us what it was. He says he prayed to the Lord three times, to take it away from him ; but the Lord refused to take it away, but told him he would give him grace to bear it. This was a case where the will of God was not made known ; and Paul did right to pray ; but you see that the general promises of God,

that he will answer the prayers of his people, did not apply to this case. He saw that it was not for the good of the apostle's own soul to give him what he asked ; and so he did not do it. But the best example, to show how we should feel when we pray, is that of the Lord Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane. It was on that dreadful night when he was betrayed. ' And he prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.' He submitted his will entirely to the will of his Father ; yet he was '*in an agony, and prayed more earnestly,*' '*with strong crying and tears.*' "

" And did not God hear his prayers, mother ? "

" I suppose he did ; for when Jesus raised up Lazarus from the dead, he said to the Father, ' I knew that thou hearest me always.' And St. Paul says, ' he was heard in that he feared :'

and St. Luke says, an angel came and strengthened him. But now, my dear, we have talked a long while. You may repeat your verse, and we will kneel down and pray, committing ourselves to the care of our kind heavenly Father, and then we will go to rest."

"Well, mother, I remember a verse that just suits what we have been talking about.

"O Lord, thy Holy Spirit give,
To teach me how to pray aright;
Whate'er amiss I ask, forgive,
And grant me favour in thy sight."

CHAPTER IV.

WE MUST PRAY IN FAITH.

"MOTHER, I want to hear more about prayer. Is there any thing more necessary, besides what you have told me, in order to pray aright?"

"Yes, my dear, many more things

are necessary ; but I will tell you but one of them now. **WE MUST PRAY IN FAITH.** St. James says, 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him. *But let him ask in faith,* nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.' "

"What is it to ask in *faith*, mother ? I do not understand it."

"My dear, I suppose you will never fully understand it, till you have experienced it yourself. The faith which is necessary, in order to have our prayers answered, is *confidence in the promises of God* : firmly believing that he will do just as he says. How do you feel, my dear, when I promise you any thing ?"

"I feel certain that I shall have it;

for I know that you always do as you say."

" Well, how much more certain, then, should you be, that God will do as he says; for he is a God of truth; he cannot lie. And I have already told you how many times he has promised to hear and answer the prayers of his children. I will now mention another promise, in which *faith* is made the condition upon which Jesus promises that the prayers of his disciples shall be answered. ' And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive.' And this is a very reasonable condition. Suppose I should promise to give you some particular things, whenever you ask me for them; and should hear you saying to your sister, ' I do not believe mother will give me the things she promised; ' and then you come to me, and in a cold and heartless way, ask me for them, as though you had no confidence in

my promises, and did not expect what you were asking for: do you think this would be treating me well?"

"No, mother; it would be showing that I did not believe what you said. It would be treating you very ill; and it would not be right for you to give me what I asked for. I should think your promises would not bind you to give them, for such asking."

"Well, you see that God has made *confidence in his word* the condition upon which he promises to answer our prayers. He sees into our hearts all the time; and if we do not believe his word, or if we doubt whether he will do as he says, he knows it. He is very jealous of his honour, and it would not be consistent for him to give any thing to a person who has not confidence enough in him to believe that he will do as he says he will. I suppose there is no sin more odious in the sight of God than *unbelief*, or want of confidence in Him.

It is very displeasing to us, when any person will not believe what we say."

"O yes, mother; little Ann Thompson would not believe what I said, and I felt very much grieved. She could not have offended me more."

"Well, if you cannot bear to have *your* word doubted, think how offensive it must be to the *great God* of truth, to have the truth of *his* promises doubted."

"Mother, can you tell me about any persons mentioned in the Bible, who prayed in faith?"

"Yes, my dear; I have a great many things of this kind to tell you. All the stories that I am going to tell you, will be examples of the *prayer of faith*. But, as I want to use most of them for explaining other points, which I mean to talk about, I will now only tell you two or three of them. The apostle James, speaking of the prayer of faith, says, 'Elias was a man subject to like passions as

we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain ; and it rained not on the earth, by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.’ ”

“ What did he pray that it might not rain for, mother ? ”

“ Ahab, the King of Israel, was a very wicked man. He established the worship of the idol called Baal, and persecuted and killed the prophets of the Lord. And Elijah went to him, and told him in the name of the Lord, that, on account of his great wickedness, there should be no dew nor rain, except as he prayed for it. And Elijah prayed to the Lord not to send any rain upon the earth ; and there was none for three years and six months. You see what strong faith he had ; for, if he had not believed that the Lord would certainly have heard his prayer, he would not have ventured to tell Ahab that there would not be rain.”

“ Well, mother, please to tell me about his praying for rain, afterwards.”

“ There is something very striking about that, my dear, which I want to tell you when we come to talk about persevering in prayer; and so I will not speak of it now. There is a beautiful example of the prayer of faith, related in the fourteenth chapter of the second book of Chronicles. Asa, King of Judah, was a pious man, who feared the Lord. And Zerah, the Ethiopian, a wicked heathen, came to fight against Asa, with an army of a *million of men*, and three hundred chariots. Asa had but little more than half that number of men, in his army. But, he trusted in the Lord. And before he went to the battle, he prayed to the Lord, and said, ‘ Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord, our God;

for we *rest on thee*, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.' "

"O that was a beautiful prayer, mother."

"Yes, my dear; and you see that the most striking thing about it is, *strong confidence in God*. He did not trust in the strength of his armies, nor in any preparations which he had made to defend himself and his country, against the great army that was coming to fight against him. He knew that the Lord directs all things, and that he was able, by the feeblest means, to overthrow this great multitude; and he rested with cheerful confidence upon his God: 'It is nothing for thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power.' This is an excellent pattern of Christian feeling. We are apt to be discouraged, and think it is of no use to pray, because the

blessing we need is a great one, or because there are difficulties in the way. But such faith as Asa had, would remove all our discouragements. It is just as easy for God to give a great blessing as a small one; and whatever may be the difficulties in the way, he is able to remove them, if we will only *believe*. This is the way Christians should feel, when they are praying for a revival of religion. They often get discouraged, because there are so few Christians awake and lively in religion, and because the people are so careless and wicked. But, if they had Asa's faith, it would overcome all their fears.

“The Lord can clear the darkest skies,
Can give us day for night.”

“And did the Lord answer the
prayer of Asa, mother.”

“Yes, my dear; and it is in the
Bible, for our encouragement. The
Lord helped the children of Israel,
and they beat this great army, and

overthrew them. There is another example, something like this, in the twentieth chapter of the same book. The Moabites and Ammonites came with a great army to fight against Jehoshaphat, another good king of Judah. And when Jehoshaphat heard that they were coming, he was afraid, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast, throughout all Judah. And the people came together to *ask help of the Lord.*”

“And should not we do like them, mother, when we are in difficulty?”

“Yes, my dear, if people would always ask help of the Lord, they would get along much better than they do. When the people had come together, Jehoshaphat stood and prayed, saying: ‘O Lord God of our fathers, *art* not thou God in heaven? and rulest *not* thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand *is there not* power and might, so that none is able to with-

stand thee? *Art* not thou our God, *who* didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest to the seed of Abraham, thy friend, forever! And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, *as* the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name *is* in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not: Behold, *I say, how* they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that com-

eth against us ; neither know we what to do : but our eyes *are* upon thee.' This is an excellent pattern for the prayer of a Christian, pleading for the blessing of God upon himself and others. He first pleads the promises of God, and then describes his critical circumstances, and tells his wants. Then, in conclusion, he confesses his own helplessness, and turns, with strong confidence to God, as his only helper : ' We have no might against this great company that cometh against us ; neither know we what to do : *but our eyes are upon thee.*' Here was *faith*, which has power with God."

" And did the Lord answer his prayer too, mother ? "

" Yes ; the spirit of the Lord came upon the prophet Jahaziel, and he said to Jehoshaphat and the people, in the name of the Lord, ' Be not afraid nor dismayed, by reason of this great multitude, *for the battle is not your's,*

but God's." This is what Christians are so apt to forget. They become discouraged, because they have no strength in themselves; and forget that their strength is in God. O, if they would always remember this, how mightily would the work of the Lord go on ! But, the Lord showed the people that their strength was not in their numbers, nor in their armies; but in having the Lord on their side. They went out the next day to fight against their enemies. And as they went along, Jehoshaphat said to the people, 'Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem : believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.' Then 'he appointed singers to the Lord, that should praise the beauty of His holiness, as they went out before the army, and should say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth forever.' And when they began to

sing, the Lord sent confusion among their enemies, so that the Ammonites turned against the Moabites, till they had killed them; and then they turned to killing one another; so that when Jehoshaphat's army came in sight, the great multitude of their enemies were all dead bodies, lying on the ground."

"O how wonderful, mother!"

"Yes; but it was all in answer to the prayer of faith."

"Can you tell me any story about the prayer of faith, from the New Testament, mother?"

"Yes; in the fourth chapter of Acts, it is related that the rulers of the Jews, put Peter and John in prison; and the next day, they brought them out, and threatened them, and commanded them not to preach, or to teach any more in the name of Jesus. And they went to their own company, and told all that the rulers had said to them. And when they heard it,

they prayed and said, ‘Lord, thou art God, which hast made Heaven, and Earth, and the Sea, and all that in them is, Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.’ The apostles had strong confidence in God; and he heard

them ; and the place where they were was shaken ; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”

CHAPTER V.

WE MUST PRAY WITH RIGHT FEELINGS.

“ COME, my dear mother, I want to hear more about prayer.”

“ Well, my dear ; this time, we will talk about the feelings we ought to have towards God, when we pray. The prophet Isaiah says, ‘ Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’ ”

“ I do not know what *contrite* means mother.”

“ To have a contrite spirit, my dear,

is to feel sorry, and to be deeply humbled, on account of having sinned against God; and to feel broken-hearted, and submissive to God, willing to be pardoned in any way that pleases Him. Hard-hearted and impenitent sinners feel angry with God, because he has threatened to punish them in hell, if they do not repent, and believe in Jesus; and they are too proud to accept of pardon on account of what Christ has done. They want to do something to deserve salvation, so that they can have the praise themselves. But, a contrite person, feels sensible that he deserves to be punished in hell forever; and he humbles himself in the dust in the presence of God. And he is willing and glad to be forgiven on account of the merits of Christ. A most beautiful example of this feeling is contained in the fifty-first Psalm. This is David's prayer, when his heart was subdued and

broken, under a deep sense of his sins. You may read it, my dear."

"Have mercy upon me, O God!
According to thy loving-kindness:
According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash me throughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions:
And my sin *is* ever before me.
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in thy sight:
That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest,
And be clear when thou judgest.
Behold! I was shapen in iniquity;
And in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold! thou desirest truth in the inward parts:
And in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know
wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me to hear joy and gladness;
That the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.
Hide thy face from my sins,
And blot out all mine iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence;

And take not thy Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ;
And uphold me *with thy* free Spirit.

Then will I teach transgressors thy ways ;
And sinners shall be converted unto thee.
Deliver me from blood-guiltiness,
O God, thou God of my salvation !
And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.
O Lord ! open thou my lips ;
And my mouth shall show forth thy praise.
For thou desirest not sacrifice ;—else would I give *it* :
Thou delightest not in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit :
A broken and a contrite heart, O God ! thou wilt not despise.

Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion :
Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.
Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,
With burnt offering and whole burnt offering :
Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.”

“ You observe that David begins this prayer, by crying out for mercy, and beseeching God to cleanse him from his sins. He then goes on to confess his sins, with the deepest humiliation. And here is one thing

that I wish you to notice particularly. You will recollect that the particular sin which brought this distress upon him, was committed against another man ; yet he had such a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, *as committed against God*, that he cries out in the bitterness of his soul, ‘ Against *thee, thee only*, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.’ Then he bewails his sinfulness, confesses that, as God looks at the heart, no outward reformation will answer, and beseeches God, not only to forgive his sin, but to create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him. He entreats the Lord to restore him to his favour, and promises then to labour for the conversion of sinners ; and concludes with praying for the prosperity of the church. If you feel as David did, when he offered up this prayer, the Lord will not fail to answer you.”

“Must I confess my sins, when I pray, mother?”

“Yes, my dear; Solomon says, He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy. You should not only confess your sins in a general way, but you should think over your actions, and confess before God, every particular thing that you can remember, that you have done wrong, and ask Him to forgive you, for Christ’s sake. You must not only confess them in words; but you must feel heart-broken on account of them. So you see David felt.”

“Can you tell me about any other persons, mentioned in the Bible, that prayed in this way?”

“Yes, my dear, turn to the ninth chapter of Daniel, and you will find another prayer, made with the same contrite spirit, and very much like David’s, except that Daniel is con-

fessing the sins of the church, as well as his own. You may read it.

“ O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments ; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments : Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness *belongeth* unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day ; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, *that are* near, and *that are* far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us *belongeth* confusion of face, to our

kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God *belong* mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that *is* written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As *it is* written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we

might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the **LORD** watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the **LORD** our God *is* righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people *are become* a reproach to all *that are* about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, in-

cline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name."

"There is another prayer, in the ninth chapter of Ezra, very much like this; which is also an excellent pattern for Christians, when praying for a revival of religion. Ezra was deeply grieved and humbled, because of the sins of God's people, so that he rent his clothes, and plucked off the hair of his head, and sat down astonished. And after mourning in that way all day, he rose up and fell on his knees, and said, 'O my God! I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God! for our

iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.' Then he goes on to confess the particular sins of the people; to call to mind the judgments which had come upon them; and yet to acknowledge that the Lord had punished them less than they deserved. It is only when Christians come to this state of humiliation; this deep sense of their sins, and their unworthiness, that they can expect the Lord to pour out his spirit, and revive his work."

"Well, mother, can you give me some more examples of persons praying for *themselves*, in this way?"

"Yes; there was Manasseh, King of Judah. He was a very wicked man. He set up idols in the house of God, and worshipped them; and he 'shed innocent blood, very much, till he had filled Jerusalem with sorrow from one end to the other.' And the Lord sent the King of Babylon

against him; and he took him and bound him with chains, and carried him to Babylon. Then Manasseh thought of his sins, and was very sorry, and humbled himself greatly before God, and prayed to him. And the Lord heard his prayer, and brought him again to Jerusalem, and made him King again."

"O mother! how wonderful that is, that the Lord would forgive such a wicked man!"

"Yes, my dear; it shows the wonderful goodness of God towards sinners, and his willingness to forgive those that repent. The apostle John says, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' No one need think he is too great a sinner to be forgiven. The merits of Christ are sufficient for the worst of sinners; and God will pardon all who truly repent and come to him in the name of Christ

But, I have one story more to tell you, which shows what kind of feeling you must have when you pray, and what spirit God will not bless. It is a parable that Jesus told to some people that thought they were very good, and despised others.' You know a parable is a story, either real or supposed, told in order to explain the truth. In this parable, Jesus said, a Pharisee and a publican went up into the temple to pray, both at the sametime. The Pharisee said, 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.' "

"I am sure he was not humble, mother; for he was praising himself all the time.' "

"The Pharisee, my dear, showed such a spirit as God will never bless. He thought he was good enough. He had no sense of his sins, nor of his

wants. He had only to thank God, for what he was, in such a way as to take all the praise to himself. Now, if you think in your heart, ‘O how much better I am than the wicked children in the streets. I go to Sabbath-school, and to church ; I read my Bible and pray to God ; and I think God will hear my prayers :’ you may be sure he will not hear them. The Lord Jesus sharply reproves the church at Laodicea, because they had a good opinion of themselves, and did not feel their wants. ‘Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.’”

“ But how did the publican pray, mother ?”

“ He was borne down with a sense of his sins ; and he stood afar-off, and would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his

breast, saying, 'GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER.' And Christ says, 'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' But, besides being humble, we should pray with *filial feeling*, or such a feeling as a little child has towards a kind and tender parent. Do you not remember, my love, how you felt towards your father, after he had corrected you for being naughty, and you submitted to him, and begged his pardon; and he forgave you, and received you into his favour again?"

"O yes, mother, I shall never forget how I felt then. I felt very sorry that I had grieved such a kind father; and my heart almost broke, when he forgave me. I loved him better than ever; and felt as if I wanted to call him '*my father*.'"

"Well, that is the way you should

feel towards your heavenly Father. The apostle John says, 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God !' and the apostle Paul says, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage, again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' And, in another place, 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.' You will find examples of this filial feeling, in the prayer of David, after the Lord had promised to establish his kingdom, in the seventh chapter of the second book of Samuel; in the prayer of Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, in the eighth chapter of the first book of Kings; in the prayers of Jesus, at the resurrection of Lazarus, and for his disciples, before his crucifixion; and also, in the prayer of the disciples,

when threatened by the rulers, already mentioned. But, there is another feeling we must have. We must be THANKFUL. ‘In every thing, by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving*, let your request be made known unto God.’ ‘Continue in prayer, and watch in the same, *with thanksgiving*.’ So says the apostle Paul ; and Daniel was in the habit of giving thanks, when he prayed. And, most of the prayers mentioned in the Bible are full of thanksgivings. How would you feel, my dear, if you should be very kind to some poor little girl, and give her a great many good things that she needed, and she should never once thank you ; but should keep begging for more, as if she thought she had a right to every thing you had to give ?”

“ I should not like it at all, mother. I should think she did not deserve to have any thing.”

“ Well, just think what God has

done for you. He made you, with a body and mind capable of being happy. He gave you kind parents to take care of you, when you were a little baby ; and to teach you about God and Jesus. He has kept you alive, and given you food and clothing, and a great many good things, while you have been all the time sinning against him, and never thanking him in your heart. I suppose you would not give any thing more to the little girl, after you found how unthankful she was. But God is good to the unthankful, and to the evil. O think how thankful you ought to be to Him, for the gift of his dear Son. ‘ God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.’ There is perhaps no sin, my dear, more hateful, both in the sight of God and man, than the sin of ingratitude. And we cannot expect God will give us the things we pray for, when we are un-

thankful for what he has already given us.”

CHAPTER VI.

WE MUST FORGIVE OTHERS, WHEN WE PRAY; AND WE MUST FORSAKE SIN AND OBEY GOD, IF WE WOULD HAVE HIM ANSWER OUR PRAYERS.

“MOTHER, you told me how I must feel towards God, when I pray. Will you tell me how I must feel towards other people, too?”

“You must feel a spirit of kindness and good will to all mankind. That is the spirit of the gospel. When the angel came down to bring the news of the birth of Jesus, they sung ‘peace on earth, good will to men;’ and the same feeling must be formed in every Christian’s heart.”

“But, mother, cousin Mary has treated me very ill, and I do not feel

as if I could speak to her. Will not God hear my prayers, till I feel kind to her?"

"If she has injured you, my dear, you ought to forgive her; but it is very likely, that, if you examine your conduct towards her, you will find that you are to be blamed yourself. But, even if it is not so; if the blame is all on her side, you must forgive her. If you have any 'hard feeling' against her, or any other person, God will not hear your prayers. When you go to pray, your heart will be hard, and you will feel no sense of the presence of God. Jesus says, we must love our enemies, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that treat us ill. And, in another place, he says, 'When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your father also, which is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. But, if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in

Heaven, forgive your trespasses.' This is very plain. If you do not forgive *others*, the Lord has declared that he will not forgive *your* sins. So you see it is in vain for you to go to God, in prayer, while you feel a single unkind feeling towards any person in the world."

"O mother; then I am afraid I have never prayed in my life!"

"Well; Jesus told a parable, to show how unreasonable it is for us to expect to have our own sins forgiven, if we will not forgive others. In those days, kings often had absolute power over their people, so that they could take their lives, or sell them into slavery whenever they pleased. And, Jesus said, there was a certain king, who called for a settlement with his people; and he found one man who owed him a great sum of money; *more than fifteen millions of dollars.*"

"That was a great sum, mother;

more than I ever counted in my life. How could the man pay it?"

"He was not able to pay it; and the king commanded that he and his wife and children should be sold to pay the debt."

"But the man came and fell down before him, and besought him to have patience with him, and he would pay him all. And the king had compassion on him, and forgave him the debt."

"O how thankful the poor man must have been, mother, when the king gave him so much money!"

"We should suppose he would have been very thankful, my dear; but his actions did not show it. For he went and found a poor man that owed him a very small sum: about fourteen dollars, and he caught him by the throat, and told him to pay him what he owed. But the poor man had nothing to pay, and fell down before him, and begged him to

have patience with him, and he would pay him all."

"Then, mother, I am sure he would remember the kind example of his king, and forgive the poor man the little debt, after the king had forgiven him so much."

"No, my dear; he had not the least regard for the golden rule; and he forgot how he felt, when he and his family were about to be sold into slavery, to pay his great debt. He would not hearken to the poor man's entreaties; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt."

"O what a cruel, ungrateful man, mother! I am sure everybody would hate such a man."

"Yet, my dear, that was not so bad, in the sight of God, as it is for us to refuse to forgive those that injure us. We owe a debt to God, far greater than this man owed to his king. We have disobeyed him, while

he was doing us good. We have sinned against him *all our lives*. Think how many years old you are ; and then reckon up the days, and the hours, and the minutes, and the seconds ; and then remember, that all this time you have been guilty of sinning against God. You will find that your debt, instead of being a *million*, is more than you can calculate. It is like the sand upon the sea-shore, or the stars in the sky, which cannot be counted. Yet, all this, God is willing to forgive you, for the sake of his dear Son. Think, then, how mean, and vile, and odious you will appear in his sight, if you will not forgive the little injury you may have received from one of your fellow-creatures.”

“ What did the king do, mother, when he heard what the man had done.”

“ He called the man to him, and said to him, “O thou wicked servant, I for-

gave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" And the king was very angry, and commanded that the man should be punished till he should pay the debt."

"Well, mother, I think that was right; for it was only treating him as he had treated the other."

"Very true, my dear; and 'so' says, Jesus, 'shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.' It is very clear, then, that if you pray to God, while harbouring an unforgiving temper towards others, he will not answer your prayers. Indeed, he has only taught us to pray for the forgiveness of our sins, just '*as we forgive others.*'"

"But this is not all, my dear; we must forsake sin, and obey God, if we would have him hear our prayers. David says, 'If I regard ini-

quity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

"What does he mean by that, mother?"

"He means that, if you do not heartily forsake sin ; but secretly love and cherish it in your heart, God will not hear your prayers. Suppose you were to think to yourself, 'I love mother, and I want her to love me. I will mind her in every thing but this one : I am so fond of the sweet-meats, which she has forbidden me to touch, that I cannot give up eating them, whenever I can do it without her knowledge,' could you come to me, with any confidence, to ask for any thing you want?"

"No, mother; I should feel so ashamed that I could not ask you for any thing."

"But God knows your heart ; and if there is any sin that you secretly love and cherish, and are unwilling to give up for the sake of Christ, he

will see your hypocrisy, and refuse to hear your prayers. And Solomon says, 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, *even his prayer shall be abomination.*'"

"What does he mean by *turning away his ear from hearing the law*, mother."

"I suppose it means slighting God's law, and disobeying it, as all impenitent sinners do."

"Then, mother, according to that, the prayers of all, whose hearts have not been changed, are abomination to the Lord. Is it so?"

"Yes, my dear; the Bible says it is; and if you think a moment, you will see that it could not be otherwise. All impenitent sinners, or persons who have not become truly pious, are *God's enemies*. They are opposing his government, and fighting against him. Suppose your little brother had done some naughty thing, for which I had threatened to

punish him ; and he should come to me, with a great stick in his hand, swinging it at me, as if to say, ‘ touch me if you dare,’ and at the same time beg me to forgive him. How should I naturally feel, in regard to his prayer ? ”

“ It would make him appear a great deal worse: I am sure it would be *abomination* to you.”

“ Well, that would be just like the prayers of impenitent sinners. They want God to forgive their sins, while they are fighting against him. Yet, a great many people think they *merit* God’s favour, by such prayers.”

“ Then, mother, must I wait till my heart is changed, before I try to pray ? ”

“ No, my dear ; if you do, I am afraid you will never pray. It is your duty to pray now, *with a penitent, believing heart* ; and you ought at once to go to God, and *give him your heart*, and then your prayers

will be acceptable to him. But, until you do this, every thing you do is sin, because you are living in opposition to God. The prophet Isaiah says, 'your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.' And the Lord Jesus says to his disciples, 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' "

"I do not know what it is to abide in Christ, mother."

"To be in Christ, is to take him as our Saviour; and in order to do this, we must repent and forsake our sins. To *abide* in Christ, is to continue in a penitent, obedient, and loving frame of mind, to have a sense of his presence with us, and to enjoy constant communion with him. And this is necessary, in order to give us a right to this promise. And the same thing is declared by the apostle

John, in his first epistle. ‘And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments*, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.’”

CHAPTER VII.

WE MUST PRAY WITH WATCHFULNESS AND PERSEVERANCE, EARNESTNESS, AND IMPORTUNITY.

“MOTHER, is there any thing necessary in prayer, besides what you have told me?”

“Yes, my dear; I have several things more to tell you, which you must observe, if you would ask aright. And the first is, that you must WATCH.

“What is it, to *watch*, mother?”

“Do you remember, my dear, when we were at Mr. Smith’s, in the country, what the little boys were doing?”

"Yes, mother; Mr. Smith was gathering his wheat into the barn ; and the little boys were set at the gate, to keep the cattle out of the field."

"Well, they were *watching*. The cattle wanted to get into the field, and eat up the wheat ; and the boys had to *watch* to keep them out. So Satan wants to come into your heart, and rule there, by putting evil thoughts into your mind, and persuading you to embrace principles contrary to God's word. But, you must *watch* against him. Keep such a look-out, that, whenever any evil thought or bad feeling comes into your heart, you will be ready to put it away in an instant. You will need to watch continually against bad feelings and thoughts ; and also, lest you should lose the spirit of prayer, which you ought always to carry with you. When Jesus was in the garden, with his disciples, on the night in which he was betrayed, he said to

his disciples '*watch and pray*, that ye enter not into temptation.' And, in another place, he says, 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, *watch*.' The apostle Paul says, 'continue in prayer, and *watch in the same*, with thanksgiving.'"

"How can we watch *in* prayer, mother? Can we watch at the same time that we are praying?"

"Yes, my dear; we must watch against wandering thoughts. If we do not, before we think of it, we shall find our thoughts running upon other things; and you must know it is very displeasing to God, for us to pretend to be praying to him, while we are thinking about something else. But the apostle Peter says, we must '*watch unto* prayer.' We must watch *before* we pray, that all wandering thoughts may be shut out of our hearts so that we may go before God, in a right frame of mind; we must watch *in* prayer, to keep our hearts from

wandering; and we must watch *after* prayer, and all the time, to keep our hearts in a praying frame. And this leads me to mention another thing that is necessary to *prevailing prayer*. The apostle Paul says, we must 'pray *without ceasing* ;' 'continue instant in prayer ;' and 'pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance.' "

" But how can anybody pray all the time, mother? We must do something else besides praying."

" The apostle does not mean that we must be all the time in our closets; but that we must keep our minds in a praying frame. We must always maintain a spirit of prayer, so that we could break off from our employments at any time, and pray with proper feeling. The things that we desire, must lie upon our hearts, so that we shall think of them, while about our work. And, we

must often send up short prayers to God in our hearts, while we are busy about other things. This is called *ejaculatory* prayer. You will find a beautiful example of this kind of prayer in the second chapter of Nehemiah. This good man was the cup-bearer to the king of Persia."

"I do not know what a cup-bearer is, mother."

"It was the custom among the kings; in that country, to have servants to wait on them; and it was esteemed a great honour to be appointed to such an office. The cup-bearer was the person that gave the king his drink. Nehemiah was a Jew; and he heard that the people that were left in the land of Judea, were in great affliction; and that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and the gates burned with fire. This made him feel very bad; and he sat down and wept and mourned, a long time, and fasted and prayed. But,

Nehemiah was soon called to give the king his drink. Before this, he had always appeared cheerful in the presence of the king ; but now he was sad ; and the king said to him, ‘ Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick ? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart.’ Then Nehemiah was afraid, and said to the king, ‘ why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire ?’ Then the king asked him what he desired. ‘ So,’ says Nehemiah, ‘ I prayed to the God of heaven.’ It would not have been possible for him to have gone away by himself to pray ; yet he felt that he needed the help of God just at that moment. So he offered up his desires to God, *in his own heart*, without speaking the words ; and the Lord heard his prayer, and inclined the heart of the

king to give him what he asked. And so you will find a great many cases, every day, in which you will need the help of God, when you cannot go away by yourself to pray. You will find evil thoughts coming into your mind, when you will want the help of God's Spirit to keep them out ; you will find your heart inclined to do wrong, when you will want the Spirit of God to help you resist the temptation ; and in a great many ways you will need the help of God's grace continually. And, if you keep your heart right, and maintain a spirit of prayer all the time, you can lift up your heart to God for help, at any time and in any place, even in the midst of company, and he will hear you."

" But there are two things more my dear, that are necessary to prevailing prayer : We must be *earnest* and *importunate*."

“I do not know what *importunate* means.”

“If you come and ask me to give you a piece of bread, and I do not hear you the first time, and you keep on asking till you get it, you will be importunate. But, the examples which I am going to relate, will show what it means.”

“Mother, do tell me first about being *earnest* in prayer.”

“Well, if you will turn to the first chapter of the first book of Samuel, you will find a very interesting story about Hannah, the mother of Samuel. She had no child; and she longed for one very much. And, when she went up to the house of the Lord, she wept, and would not eat. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, ‘O Lord of Hosts, if thou wilt indeed, look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine

handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life.' She was very earnest, in this prayer. Her whole heart was in it. And God heard her prayer, and gave her a son; and she gave him to the Lord, as she had promised, and he was a pious boy, and became a great man, a judge, and a prophet. And this shows the truth of the promise made to Jeremiah: 'And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall *search for me with ALL YOUR HEART.*' But there is another case, very much like this. Hezekiah, the good, pious king of Judah, was sick. And the prophet Isaiah came to him, and told him to set his house in order, for the time had come that he must die."

"O mother, did he not feel very unhappy when he heard that?"

"Yes, my dear; and he turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the

Lord, and said, ‘I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee, in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.’ And he wept very hard.”

“And did God hear his prayer, mother?”

“Yes; and before the prophet had gone from the porch of the house, the Lord sent him back to tell Hezekiah, ‘Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold I will heal thee; on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years. So the king got well; and his life was lengthened fifteen years.”

“Yes, mother, I see what kind of prayer the Lord will answer. I remember reading about little Phebe Bartlett, when the Lord gave her a new heart. She prayed with great

earnestness, and cried very hard, and said, 'I pray, beg, O Lord, give me salvation.' "

Yes; and this was the way that Jesus prayed. When he was in the garden of Gethsemane, he was in *an agony*, and prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

"What does *agony* mean, mother?"

"It is a word generally used when we are describing the severest pain. When a person is dying, he is said to be in the *agonies* of death. But here it is applied to the sufferings of the soul. I suppose no language could express deeper feeling, or more painful exercises of the mind. The apostle Paul describes this feeling, in the eighth chapter of Romans. 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh interces-

sion for us, with GROANINGS WHICH CANNOT BE UTTERED.' "

" Well, mother, now tell me about praying with *importunity*."

" There is a very interesting story about Jacob's wrestling with the angel. I do not know that we can with strict propriety apply it to what we are talking about; but it is an excellent illustration of importunate prayer. Esau, Jacob's brother, was angry with him, and threatened to kill him. So Jacob went away to his uncle Laban's, and stayed a great while, till he had a family of children grown up. Then he came back to the place where his father Isaac and his brother Esau lived. But, before he arrived, he heard that his brother was coming to meet him, with four hundred men. And he was afraid, and much distressed; for he thought his brother was coming to kill him. And he prayed to God, and said, ' O God of my father Abraham, and God

of my father Isaac, the Lord who saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.' And, in the night, Jacob was alone; and an angel came and wrestled with him all night; and when he saw that he prevailed not against Jacob, he touched his thigh, and put it out of joint. And, at break of day, the angel said, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh.' But Jacob said, '*I will*

not let thee go, except thou bless me.' So the angel blessed him, and changed his name to Israel, which means '*a prince of God* ;' 'for,' said he, 'as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.' Now, this is the way we must pray, if we would have our prayers answered. Although the angel had put Jacob's thigh out of joint, he would not let him go till he had secured the blessing. So, when we desire any thing of God, if he does not give it to us at first, we should keep on asking, and not be discouraged, whatever difficulties seem to be in the way ; but hold on to his promises, and continue in prayer, till we obtain the blessing we desire, or till God shows us that it is not his will that we should have it."

"Mother, you said you would tell me about Elijah's praying for rain."

"Yes, my dear, I will. After three years and a half, when the earth was parched and dried up, so that nothing

would grow, Ahab and one of his men went out through all the land, about the brooks and rivers, to search for grass, to save their horses and mules from starving to death. But, while they were on their way, Elijah met them."

"Was he not afraid the king would kill him, mother?"

"No, my dear; he trusted in the Lord; and the Bible says, 'the righteous are as bold as a lion.' "

"Well, what did the king say, when he saw Elijah?"

"He said, 'Art thou he that troubleth Israel?' But Elijah answered and said, 'I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord.' And the prophet told him to go and gather all the people together, with the false prophets and priests of the idols: the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the grove, four hun-

dred. So Ahab gathered together all the children of Israel, and all the prophets, to Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to the people, and said, 'How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.' To *halt* is to stop. If you were going anywhere, and should come to two roads, and, not knowing which to take, should stop between them, or at the place where they separate, you would be halting between two opinions; whether to take one or the other of the roads. This was the case with the children of Israel. They were at a loss to decide, whether they would worship God, or the idol called Baal. Therefore the prophet inquired, 'How long halt ye between two opinions?' and exhorted them to make an immediate decision. A great many people live all their lives without coming to a decision, as to whom they will serve. They

have no idea of dying in their sins, and going to hell ; but they will not make up their minds to serve God *now*. They go on halting between two opinions ; and death generally overtakes them before they decide. O that we could see the children in our Sabbath-schools, one and all, making up their minds to take the Lord for their God now !”

“ What did the people say to Elijah, mother ?”

“ They did not answer him a word. But Elijah said, ‘ I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord ; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men.’ And he told them to let the prophets of Baal bring two young bullocks, and choose one for themselves, and cut it in pieces and lay it on wood, but put no fire under ; and he would do the same with the other : ‘ And,’ said he, ‘ call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord , and the God

that answereth by fire, let him be God.' And all the people agreed to it. So the prophets of Baal chose their bullock, and dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning till noon, saying, O Baal, hear us ! But their god did not hear them. And they leaped upon the altar. And at noon, Elijah mocked them, and said, 'Cry aloud, for he is a god ; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or he sleepeth, and must be awaked.' And they cried aloud, and cut themselves with knives, till the blood gushed out upon them. And in the evening, Elijah called the people to him. And he took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, and built an altar to the Lord. And he dug a great ditch around the altar, and put the wood on the altar, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood. Then he told them to fill four barrels with water, and

pour it on the altar; and they did so. And he said, Do it the second time; and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time; and they did it the third time. And the water ran all over the meat, and the wood, and the altar, and filled the ditch with water."

"What did he do that for, mother?"

"I suppose it was to show the people that he had not put any fire under the sacrifice, and that there was no deception in what he was going to do. Then the prophet came near the altar, and prayed, and said, 'Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.' Then the fire of the Lord came down, and burnt up the

meat, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and the water that was in the ditch."

"O, how wonderful, mother! what did the people say to that?"

"They fell on their faces, and said, 'The Lord, he is the God ; the Lord, he is the God.' Then Elijah told them to take the prophets of Baal, and not let one of them escape. And they were all taken and put to death."

"I think that was very cruel, mother."

"No, my dear ; under the law of Moses, idolatry was punished with death. These men were Israelites ; and they were not only guilty of idolatry themselves, but of teaching others to worship idols."

"But I should not think the wicked king would have let him do this."

"You see, by this, what power a man has, who lives near to God. Both the king and the people seem to have been overpowered with a

sense of the presence of God. After the prophets of Baal were killed, Elijah told Ahab to go up to his house, and eat and drink, for there was the sound of plenty of rain. But the prophet went up to the top of Mount Carmel, and threw himself down upon the ground, and put his face between his knees, and prayed for rain. Then he sent his servant to look toward the sea ; and he went, and returned and told the prophet that he saw nothing. But Elijah was not discouraged. He kept on praying ; and told his servant to go again. But he saw nothing. And he sent him again ; and kept praying, till his servant had gone and looked seven times. And the seventh time, he saw a little cloud, the size of a man's hand. And in a little while, the sky was black with clouds, and the wind blew, and there was a great rain.”

“ O ! that was wonderful, mother.

But Elijah was a prophet. I suppose the Lord would answer the prayers of a prophet, when he would not hear a common Christian."

"The apostle James, speaking of this, says, 'Elias (or Elijah) was a man subject to like passions as we are ;' showing that *special answers* to prayer were not to be confined to the prophets. But you see how *importunate* Elijah was. He prayed *six times* before he saw any appearance of an answer. Many people would be discouraged, before they had prayed half so many times as that. But he believed God's promises, and did not stop praying till he had received an answer. And this is the way that Jesus teaches us to pray. He told a parable to his disciples, to show them that men ought always to pray, and *not to faint*. He said there was a judge, who neither feared God nor man, and cared nothing about doing justice. And a poor widow came to him, and begged

him to punish some one that had injured her. And at first, he would not do it; but she kept coming to him till he was tired of it; and, though he cared nothing about doing justice, yet he said to himself that he would give her what she wanted, lest, by her continual coming, she should weary him. Then, the Lord Jesus asks his disciples, If a wicked man will give what a poor woman asks, because of her importunity, will not God hear the prayers of his own people, whom he tenderly loves, when they cry day and night unto him? And Jesus has himself given us examples of earnest, persevering, and importunate prayer. At one time, he went up into a mountain, and *continued all night in prayer to God.* And, at the time of his agony in the garden, he went away three times, and prayed for the same thing. So, when we pray, we must earnestly desire what we pray for, and keep

asking for it, till the Lord hears our prayers, or shows us that it is not consistent with his will to give us what we desire. And, when we ask for God's Spirit, or for any thing that he has told us in his word that he is willing to give, we should keep asking, and grow more earnest, and never give it up, till we have received the blessing. The Lord sometimes delays to answer our prayers, in order to try our faith, and to see whether we will persevere in asking. And sometimes he, no doubt, sees something wrong in our prayers, when we are not sensible of it. We should then examine ourselves, and strive to correct what is wrong, when our prayers are not answered as soon as we have expected.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN, WHERE, FOR WHOM, AND HOW WE MUST PRAY.

“MOTHER, there are some other things I would like to know about prayer. Does the Bible say any thing about the time and place of prayer?”

“The Bible does not tell us how many times in a day we must pray. From what I have already said, you see the necessity of praying often. But it is very important that you should have regular and stated seasons for prayer. Daniel was in the habit of praying statedly, three times a day: and David says, ‘Evening, morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice;’ and the writer of the 119th Psalm says, ‘Seven times a day do I praise thee.’ You ought to have your times for prayer, and they should

be fixed and regular; and never think of neglecting them, any more than you would think of neglecting your meals. And, in regard to our private prayers, our Saviour says they should be in secret. He told his disciples not to seek public places, where they would be seen, when they prayed; but to go into their closets, and shut the door, so that no eye but God might see them. Any secret place for prayer, where none but God can see us, is a closet. Our Lord spent much time in retired places, in prayer to God. We often read of his going up into a mountain to pray. And the garden of Gethsemane, where he prayed in such agony, the night in which he was betrayed, was a retired place, on the Mount of Olives, where he often went with his disciples. Your bed-room, or any other place where you can be free from interruption, is a proper place for your devotions. There you ought to spend

much time in reading the Bible and prayer, and in thinking about God and serious things. If you do so, you may expect God will meet with you, and bless you."

"But, mother, did Christ mean that we should never pray anywhere else, but in secret?"

"When Christ rebuked the Pharisees and hypocrites for making long prayers in public places, he did not mean to condemn public worship. You will find a great many examples of public prayer in the Bible. He only meant to condemn praying merely *to be seen* of others. The Jews had certain hours for prayer; and when these hours came, they would stop and pray, wherever they were. And many of them sought public places, where they might be seen, in order to show their great piety. Now, if you pray in any way, in order to make people think you are very pious,

you show yourself to be a hypocrite, and come under this reproof."

"Must I pray for anybody but myself, mother?"

"Yes; the apostle Paul says to Timothy, 'I exhort that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for ALL MEN; for kings, and for ALL THAT ARE IN AUTHORITY.' And to the Ephesians he says, 'Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance for ALL SAINTS, and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.' The duty of praying for our rulers is often mentioned by the apostles; and the duty of praying for ministers of the gospel."

"Mother, can you tell me about any persons mentioned in the Bible, who prayed for others?"

“Yes; Moses seemed almost to stand between God and the children of Israel, while they were in the wilderness. A great many times, the Lord threatened to destroy them for their wickedness; but then Moses would pray for them, and the Lord would forgive their sin. After the Lord had given them the ten commandments, while Moses was up in the mountain with God, the people made a calf of gold, and called it their god, and worshipped it. And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people. Now, therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.’ But Moses prayed for them, and said, ‘Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?’

Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven ; and all this land that I have spoken of, will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.' ”

“ And did the Lord hear his prayer, mother ? ”

“ Yes ; he heard his prayer, and did not destroy the people. And many times after this, when the people provoked the Lord, in the wilderness, Moses prayed for them, and they were saved. There is one class of persons, my dear, that the

Bible says you must pray for, which I have not mentioned."

"Who are they, mother?"

"Your enemies, my dear; those who hate and abuse you."

"But how can I pray for those who treat me so, mother?"

"If you feel right, you can do it. Our Saviour says you must 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.' And he has set us the example. He died for those who were his enemies; and while he hung on the cross, he prayed even for his murderers, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And the first man that was put to death for being a follower of Jesus, imitated his example. Stephen prayed for his murderers, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' "

"Well, mother, when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray,

he gave them the Lord's prayer
Must I always say the Lord's prayer,
and nothing else, when I pray?"

"Jesus told them to pray '*after this manner.*' But he did not mean that they should always say just the same words. If he had meant this, his disciples would have done so; but, very soon after he left them, we find them using other words, to express their particular desires. Before choosing a man to fill the place of Judas, as one of the apostles, they prayed, and said, 'Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.' And the prayer of the disciples, after Peter and John had been threatened, is in their own words."

"But what did Christ mean by giving us this form of prayer, if it

was not that we should say the same words?"

"I suppose he meant to give it to us as a kind of pattern, to show us how to pray, and what things to pray for; and if you consider every part of it carefully, you will find it takes in almost every thing."

"Well, mother, do tell me all about it. What may I learn from the beginning of it, '*Our Father, who art in heaven?*'"

"This teaches you to come to God, as a little child comes to its father. How do you go to your father, when you want him to give you any thing?"

"I first think whether he will be willing to give me what I want. Then I am afraid of displeasing him, so I am careful to come in such a way as to show that I reverence him. And I know my father loves me, and that he will always give me what I want, if he thinks it best. So I go to him with confidence, and tell him

just what I want. But, if he says it would not be best for me to have it, then I am satisfied, because I know that he knows best what I should have."

"Well, that is just the way that we should come to God. This part of the Lord's prayer teaches us to regard him as our Heavenly Father."

"O what a blessed thing it is, mother, to have God for our Father!"

"Yes, it is a blessed thing indeed. But, my dear, when you go to ask your father for any thing you want, do you need any one to teach you what to say to him?"

"O no mother; I can very easily tell him what I want. I just speak out my heart to him."

"Well, my dear; that is the way you ought to pray to God. If you have any desires, you can easily tell them to him. And he looks at the heart. If that is right, he will not mind so much about the words. He

wants you to speak your heart right out to him, as you do to your father."

"Why did Christ tell us to say, '*Our Father?*' Why not, '*My Father?*'"

"I suppose he meant that we should not confine our prayers to ourselves; but pray with and for others; and not feel that we have any better right to call God our Father, than others have."

"And what does '*Hallowed be thy name*' mean, mother?"

"How would you feel, my dear, if you should hear some boys in the street making sport of your father's name, and calling it out in their plays to insult him?"

"I should feel very bad, mother. I could not bear it."

"Well, those who love God, feel so about His name. They cannot bear to hear it trifled with. They wish to have Him loved and revered by everybody; and this is

what the prayer means; for God's *name*, is often put for God himself."

"And, what do we mean, when we say, '*Thy kingdom come?*' What does *thy kingdom* mean?"

"Christ is represented as a king over his people; and so the church is called the *Kingdom of God*. God has revealed to us, in the Bible, that the time will come when all the world shall be converted; and so the kingdom of God will be set up and established in the world. When we pray, '*thy kingdom come*,' we pray for that glorious day, when all the people in the world shall know the Lord. And, whenever we pray for the blessing of God upon the preaching of the gospel, upon Sabbath-schools, missionaries, or any thing that his people are doing for the conversion of the world, we pray for the coming of his kingdom. And the same thing is repeated, a little more particularly in the next part of the

prayer, '*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*' What makes heaven such a happy place is, that all the holy beings there delight in doing the will of God; and if his will were done here just as it is there, we should have a heaven upon earth. And what can any one desire more, than that the holy will of God should be done with cheerfulness and delight by all the people in the world?"

"The next part of the prayer is, '*Give us this day our daily bread:*' must we not pray for any worldly things but our daily bread?"

I suppose this petition is intended to include every thing that we need, for this life. At the same time, it teaches us to feel our dependence upon God, day by day, for all earthly blessings and not to look forward with anxious desire, for the supply of our future wants; but to be satisfied with what we need, from day to day. It teaches also the *duty* of

praying for such things as we need, to supply our earthly wants. People sometimes pray as if they thought they were not dependent upon God for food and clothing; for they never think of asking for such things."

"*And forgive us our debts.*" What does that mean, mother?"

"It means that we should pray to God to forgive us our sins. *Sin* is sometimes represented as a *debt* which we owe to God. If we owe a man any thing, if he does not forgive it, or agree to give it up, we *must pay it*. So, if God does not forgive our sins, and treat us as if we had not sinned, *we must be punished*. This is a prayer we ought to make every day; and the other part of the petition, I have already explained to you. Here you see that we are not allowed to pray for the forgiveness of our sins, any further than we forgive those that have injured us."

“ What does *temptation* mean, mother ? ”

“ Temptation is any thing that tries or proves us. If I should tell you that you must not take any of the sweet-meats that I have put away to keep, and then leave them where you can get them, to see whether you will obey me, that would be trying or proving you. Sometimes the Lord allows Satan to try to persuade us to do wrong. In such cases, we are tempted by the devil to do wrong. Sometimes, the Lord brings trouble upon us, to try or prove our piety. This is sometimes called temptation. Here, I suppose temptation means all the ways in which we may be tried, both by Satan and by afflictions. We are directed to pray that God would not suffer us to be led into temptations or trials of any kind; but that he would deliver us from all evil: both from being led into sin, by Satan and our own wicked hearts,

and from every kind of affliction, trouble, or distress. And all these things we are to ask, not for our own sake chiefly ; but that the power and goodness of God may appear, by his giving them to us. For the prayer concludes with a reason why we ask them : for, or because '*thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.*' ”

“ What does this mean, mother ? ”

“ It is as much as to say, ‘ We ask these things, because thou rulest over all things, and canst so order every thing as to do this for us ; and thou hast all power in thy hands—thou art able to give us what we ask. And we ask these things, not that we may be honoured ; but that thy name may be glorified, in showing forth to the world thy power and goodness ; for all honour and glory belong to thee.’ ”

“ And what does ‘ *Amen* ’ mean, mother ? ”

“ It means ‘ *so let it be.* ’ It was the way that the people answered to any

thing that was brought before them, to express their consent. And, I suppose, in the Jewish worship, the people showed that they agreed to the prayers that were offered to God, by saying, '*Amen—so let it be.*' When we say *amen*, at the close of our prayers, we ask God again, to let it be as we have spoken ; and by doing so, we show that we have confidence in him, that he is able and willing to give us what we ask for, if it is agreeable to his will."

"Must I ask for all these things every time I pray, mother?"

"No, my dear ; if you examine all the prayers that are mentioned in the Bible, you will find that God's people always asked for just what they felt the need of, at the time. This is a general prayer, intended to include every thing that we ever need to ask for. But, the Bible tells us to ask for the particular things that we desire ; and the prayers of good peo-

ple, which are written in the Bible, are for particular things. They always asked, in plain and simple language, for just what they wanted. And we should do the same. And, when we thank and praise God, for his goodness to us, and to the world, we should mention the particular good things that we have received from him; and when we confess our sins, we should be very particular not to keep any thing back; but mention every thing that we can think of, that we have done wrong. But, there is one thing in this prayer, of which I want you to take particular notice. *It is not a selfish prayer.* We are told to pray for the glory of God's name, for the coming of his kingdom, and that his will may be done, before we pray for our daily bread. We ought, then, to desire the glory of God, and the good of the church of Christ more than we desire any thing for ourselves. We ought

to make them the great burden of all our prayers; and to feel as the writer of one of the psalms felt, when he said, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem, (meaning the Church of God,) ABOVE MY CHIEF JOY."

THE END.













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